UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

FIRST COMMITTEE
Tenth meeting
held on
Monday, 21 October 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ALPMAN (Turkey)

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91-61505 6686V (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.1/46/PV.10
25 October 1991

ENGLISH

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Alpman (Turkey), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEMS 47 TO 65 (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. RIVERO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Cuba wishes, first of all, to extend to the Chairman and to the other officers of the Committee our congratulations on their election. We are confident that under their leadership we shall be able to bring our work to a successful conclusion. In that work, they can rely on our delegation's full cooperation.

In our statement today we should like to refer to some of the disarmament items on our agenda, while reserving our consideration of other subjects, of equal importance, for another time.

Recently, we have witnessed new steps forward in the area of nuclear disarmament. After a long process of negotiation, last July the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), according to which about 30 per cent of the strategic nuclear weapons of both countries will be destroyed.

Last September, the President of the United States put forward an initiative whereby, inter alia, some categories of nuclear weapons would be unilaterally eliminated; a few days later, his Soviet counterpart did likewise in announcing unilateral elimination of certain weapons categories, and also proposed a new moratorium on nuclear tests.

Towards the end of last week, the sole politico-military grouping which still persists in remaining in existence, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), decided to eliminate 50 per cent of all the airborne nuclear bombs, which it has stored and available for delivery.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

Hardly 48 hours ago, we learned that, according to officials of the United States Government, the United States Government intended to withdraw all the nuclear weapons that it has deployed in United States military bases in the south of the Korean peninsula; in the event that this is carried out, it will without a doubt contribute to the realization of the proposal by the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea to establish a nuclear-free zone in that part of the world.

The delegation of Cuba welcomes these steps and the measures the two major Powers have been taking to eliminate the danger of a nuclear conflagration, in accordance with the demands of the international community.

The delegation of Cuba expresses its confidence that the aforementioned measures will be implemented in full; that other, farther-reaching steps in the same direction will be taken in the days and months to come; and that, in due time, other nuclear Powers will be involved in the process. In so doing it reiterates that the nuclear warheads withdrawn under the agreements or measures which have been adopted should not be allowed to be used to improve and modernize the nuclear weapons which still exist.

The goals of achieving a total and definitive suspension of nuclear-weapon tests and of possibly turning the partial test-ban Treaty into a comprehensive test-ban treaty continue to be objectives of the international community, objectives which our delegation fully supports although it will not be achieved despite the fact that the East-West confrontation has come to an end. Pursuant to a major initiative undertaken by a group of non-aligned countries, the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty took place last January; the Conference did not succeed as was desired, as it concluded merely with an agreement to continue consultations.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

Also in the nuclear arena, the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has been unable, in the area of moratoriums on nuclear tests, to begin its negotiating activities, basically because of the opposition of some delegations. Our delegation urges the parties to the bilateral dialogue to follow up on the multilateral level. The recent initiative by Sweden, whereby it put forward a draft comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty - which we welcome - is another opportunity to express the necessary political will and the necessary will to negotiate.

As long as nuclear weapons continue to exist, the danger of their being used, or of the threat that they will be used, will persist. Our delegation, therefore, subscribes to the criterion that, even if the best assurance of the non-use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination, while they continue to be part of the arsenals of some States - as an expression of doctrines and concepts which have never been accepted by the international community, and are, moreover, outmoded and aimed at strategic enemies and rivals which have already ceased to exist - it will be necessary to provide the necessary security guarantees against the use or threat of use of these weapons to countries which, like Cuba, do not possess nuclear weapons.

In other areas of disarmament, intense work has been carried out over the past year. Within the Conference on Disarmament, negotiations have been intensified with a view to concluding the convention on the prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons, which will provide for the destruction of such weapons and of their production facilities, and work is continuing intensively with a view to concluding negotiations as quickly as possible, and as early as possible in 1992.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

The incorporation in the convention of a ban on the use of these weapons, the renunciation by the two countries which possess these weapons of their intention to keep 2 per cent of their chemical arsenals after the stipulated period for them to be destroyed - an intention which had been rejected by a number of countries - and the renunciation by one of those countries of retaliation, or retaliation in reprisal - all these were factors of major importance and obstacles which were eliminated in order for the work to continue.

There remain key questions to be resolved: for example, the issue of verification in the civilian sector of the chemical industry; the provisions concerning the composition, functions and role of the executive council; and the issue of the financing of the activities of the future organization. These are all matters about which our delegation has already stated its views and has, on some subjects, already put forward specific ideas.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

For Cuba, a country that does not possess chemical weapons, as we stated at the plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament held on 22 August 1991, the conclusion of a non-discriminatory convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer or use of such weapons and containing the necessary provisions for destroying existing arsenals, production installations and launching systems, is not only of major importance but would also provide an indispensable guarantee for our security.

We will continue to participate in the negotiations on the future convention. In Cuba's view, the convention should be universal in character and include all States possessing chemical weapons. All States, whether chemical-weapon States or not, should have equal obligations and rights, although, in order to be realistic, those States possessing such weapons should have certain additional obligations. The convention must ensure that after the initial period of destruction no State party could again have stockpiles of such weapons or have the capacity to produce them. The convention must also cover all existing chemical weapons and production and stockpiling facilities.

It must not contain any provision that might limit or restrict international trade in chemical substances for uses not prohibited by the convention. We share the view already expressed by a number of delegations that, once the convention has been concluded, there should be no additional control machinery that might establish a double standard set up to supervise the trade in chemical substances for approved purposes. The convention must include provisions for assistance in case of the use or threat of use of chemical weapons against another State party.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

The economic and technological development of States parties must not be adversely affected in any way. With regard to verification, an adequate balance must be struck between the need for a reliable and effective system and what may be actually viable without becoming an unnecessary financial burden, that might even act as a disincentive to universal accession to the convention.

The types of inspection to be undertaken must be complementary. They must constitute an essential minimum and must be as unintrusive as possible. They must not affect the legitimate manufacturing interests of States. Inspection by denunciation must never be used indiscriminately by any State, and no political or other kinds of consideration must enter into the inspection process.

Before concluding on the subject of chemical weapons, the delegation of Cuba wishes to state that it welcomes the initiative taken by the Finnish authorities to organize training courses on matters closely related to verification activities. We also welcome the priority given to analytical chemicals from developing countries.

Cuba has already participated in a useful training course for those who will eventually work in some future national authority or as possible inspectors in the technical secretariat of some future organization. We very much appreciate that initiative because of the high scientific and technological level of the training and because of its significance for international cooperation, especially with the developing countries.

At the same time, Cuba would urge other countries to promote such cooperation in other areas related to the convention.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

An important milestone was reached with the successful conclusion last September of the Third Review Conference of the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons. We feel that that Conference and the Final Declaration restated two fundamental principles: the rejection of the very existence of such weapons of mass destruction and the continuing need to respect the ban while allowing for peaceful uses.

In spite of all the military and other harassments to which Cuba has been subject over the past three decades and in spite of its economical strangulation by the world's most developed country through its criminal economic blockade, Cuba, at the cost of major sacrifices, has accumulated the necessary scientific and technological knowledge to serve its social needs. This includes knowledge in the fields of medicine, biotechnology and genetic engineering. At the present time we have a large army of scientists who, through innovative contributions and discoveries, have raised our national standards in the fields of health and scientific applications. We have also brought these benefits to other countries.

Because of this high level of scientific development Cuba is prepared to contribute experts for the various tasks that will be performed under the aegis of the United Nations and of the Convention.

The expansion of confidence-building measures agreed to at the last conference on that subject will certainly help to promote the attainment of the Convention's objectives. My country has participated in information exchanges on matters related to the Convention, and we urge others who have

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

not yet done so to take part. At the same time, we urge those who are not yet parties to the Convention to accede to it.

The regional aspects of conventional disarmament have also developed recently. This is especially true in Europe, as evidenced by the agreements signed last November in Paris. These agreements will undoubtedly help to reduce the gigantic military arsenals existing in that continent. By the same token, tensions between States in that region should also be lessened.

As we have already stated, the Cuban delegation believes that progress in the area of conventional disarmament cannot be separated from progress in negotiations concerning nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

As we consider conventional disarmament in the regional framework, we must take into account the characteristics and peculiarities of each region; the degree of tension and conflict that already exists; the disparity between volume of weapons and armed forces; and the trade in and production of weapons.

Obviously, if such negotiations are to be realistic and stand any chance of success, not only the States of the region but also outside States that have military bases or troops in the region should participate. A commitment by nuclear and other militarily important States to respect the agreements reached in various regions would obviously be another factor favouring the success of such agreements.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

On the subject of international transfers of conventional arms, we want to thank the Secretary-General and the governmental experts who assisted him for the study they have carried out. The study shows the importance of this subject and the need for in-depth analysis.

We wish to express a few preliminary thoughts on this matter. The Cuban delegation agrees that transparency in information can help eliminate unfounded suspicion and fear with respect to the position and behaviour of a given State and can help prevent the spiralling possession of weapons, which results in a great wastage of resources needed for the economic and social development of peoples.

With respect to arms transfers, that concept can be useful only if accompanied by references to other ways by which States come into possession of weapons, particularly those of a threatening or aggressive nature: that is, production and stockpiling. It would be truly unfair and discriminatory to ask a State that depends on weapons imports to defend its sovereignty to tell the world what types and quantities of weapons it has received while States that continuously produce, update and develop all manner of weapons, making use of any international situation as a proving-ground, are permitted to remain silent on their production figures and their stockpiles of weapons for export or, more dangerous still, for arming their own forces on their territories or on their military bases throughout the world.

Although the moral fibre and courage of a people determined to defend to the death its homeland from aggression weighs more heavily than the weaponry its possesses, we must not underestimate security considerations. High ideals and aspirations to peace must not make us forget the realities. Countries which, like Cuba, have been - and, even at the dawn of the so-called new world

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

order, remain - the target of constant threats and aggression of all kinds, including armed military threats making use of the sophisticated techniques of war produced by the United States military-industrial complex, cannot share partial concepts or proposals that foment insecurity rather than building confidence.

Among the factors that motivate States to acquire weapons, the study highlights military threats. We fully agree with that assessment, and with the view that it is the sovereign right of every State to acquire weapons for its defence. But it would have been useful to stress several points that are missing from the conclusions and recommendations set forth in the study despite their importance and their impact in reducing arms transfers.

I am referring to: the need for the peaceful settlement of disputes; the non-use or threat of use of force; non-agression; the principle that territory is not to be occupied by force; and full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. To abide by and implement strictly those principles of international law, which are also enshrined in the Charter, would unquestionably be the best confidence-building measure, one that would bring States greater success in their efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament and to devote all possible resources to the economic and social development of their peoples.

In keeping with its calling and desire to enable all peoples to live in a just, worthy and lasting peace, Cuba will support any legitimate, non-discriminatory measure that can help our peoples achieve the peace and security they desire. But we cannot fail to express our surprise that some of the countries which for years have fanned hostility and promoted fratricidal struggles between peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America by flooding

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

certain countries with weapons and transferring weapons-production technology to them, causing vast losses of resources and lives and prejudicing their sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination and independence, are now making themselves out to be models and champions of the immediate implementation of multilateral machinery on arms transfers. That machinery is carefully devised to meet their conditions and suit their interests, and is offered as a first, innocent instrument that might be needed in the future to determine - by who knows what criteria - whether a given State will be allowed to import weapons for its own defence.

Today we are talking of transparency in arms transfers; tomorrow we may be talking about limiting such transfers. But in our discussions of general and complete disarmament we have agreed that the level of armament should be the minimum necessary to defend national sovereignty and internal order. Thus, to achieve our purposes we must also talk now of transparency in production, stockpiling and transfers both of arms and of technologies - all without forgetting the principle of the need to maintain the security of States. Perhaps tomorrow we can discuss limiting the production, stockpiling and transfer of weapons and weapons technology.

We must not limit our scope. Today there is great concern about weapons of mass destruction, and we have heard many proposals for preventing their spread. We could easily include conventional weapons along with weapons of mass destruction in our deliberations and our agreements.

The Cuban delegation believes that this item deserves thorough, serious consideration, and that Member States should be asked to state their views on the subject.

(Mr. Rivero, Cuba)

We consider that, to be useful, any confidence-building measures we might eventually adopt should meet the following criteria: they should be adopted without a vote and enjoy the support of all delegations; they should be strictly voluntary; they should take into account the security interests of States; they should be universal, broad and non-discriminatory; and, with respect to transparency, they must involve consultations with and participation by, both suppliers and receivers.

Obviously, we must define what specific weapons are to be included in the register. That identification should be made at another time, but my delegation considers that special attention must be given to all weapons that could be considered offensive weapons and to those that have been used in surprise attacks and to commit aggression against States.

Mr. MORONIECKI (Poland): May I begin by expressing congratulations to the Chairman, and to the other officers of the Committee on their election. I also wish to express warm greetings to Under-Secretary-General Yasushi Akashi and to the able members of his staff, on whose competence we depend so much.

Many speakers in the general debate at this session of the Assembly, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Skubiszewski, referred to the momentous times through which the international community is living. Some considered the unprecedented unanimous upholding of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter by the permanent members of the Security Council to mark a watershed in the history of the United Nations and in international relations at large. Others considered as history in the making the spontaneous collapse of ideologies, alignments and power structures and their replacement, as reference points, by the rule of law and common human values. Both views appear to be accurate. Equally accurate is the opinion of the Secretary-General, who states in his annual report:

> "The perspectives that have now been opened should enable us to weave collective approaches in [the field of arms limitation and disarmament] more tightly into the fabric of peace-making and conflict control". (A/46/1, p. 11)

Indeed, as the report notes, the militarization of human society is one of the principal sources of chronic instability in international relations and, I would add, on the national level as well. An aspiration to reduce this instability, taking advantage of the end to the 40-year-long cold war, stands out as a primordial challenge to the United Nations.

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

The sense of history, of the unique opportunities as well as the challenges, is perhaps nowhere more pronounced than in the areas falling within the purview of this Committee - that is to say, peace, international security and disarmament.

The steady degradation of the international security environment in terms of the vital East-West platform was checked and dramatically reversed with the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in November 1990 in Paris. Strict implementation of the Treaty is of paramount importance to stability and security not in Europe alone. The process of ratification and entry into force of the Treaty should therefore be completed as soon as possible. We believe, moreover, that succession to the obligations under the Treaty must take place with regard to all States emerging on Soviet territory.

Those two requirements have to be met if European manpower levels are to be cut substantially in a new negotiating forum which, it is hoped, will be established next year with the participation of all the States of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The CFE Treaty and the now-operational regime provided for in the Vienna Document on confidence- and security-building measures are important building blocks of a system of security, stability and cooperation in Europe which has important extra-regional implications. It is to be hoped that the open skies regime - if and when agreed upon - will add a new and meaningful dimension to the confidence-building process. It is our firm view that all the States of Europe should associate themselves with the open skies concept given its potential role and its contribution to confidence and security in Europe.

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

For its part, Poland seeks to promote this objective - a cooperative system of equal security for all - by closer and growing integration with the European Communities, the Council of Europe and other European institutions as well as through rapprochement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which continues to exert an important and stabilizing influence in Europe. Of no less importance in this endeavour are Poland's friendly relations with all the neighbouring and other States with which it shares common values, common interests and common aspirations. This community of values, interests and aspirations is manifested by our subregional cooperation - trilateral with the Republic of Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic; and hexagonal with, besides these two States, also includes Austria, Italy and Yugoslavia.

It is our fervent hope that the ongoing ethnic strife that is tearing Yugoslavia apart will not ultimately result in irreparable damage to the fabric of subregional stability, eroding in the process the broader goals of regional security systems now maturing in Europe.

As for Poland's neighbours in the East and in the West, two important Treaties have just been ratified by united Germany and Poland, and we view with confidence the ongoing negotiations of the treaty with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the declarations on mutual relations with the neighbouring Republics that either have been or soon will be completed.

Finally, we attach great importance to promoting - and shall spare no effort to this end - a close inter-State cooperative scheme in the Baltic region designed to cover all parties situated around the Baltic region.

International security, confidence and cooperation need to be constantly buttressed if they are to withstand the challenges posed by regional disputes

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

and conflicts in Europe and beyond. While political solutions may in such cases bring badly needed relief, they will stand little chance of enduring if they are not followed by meaningful arms control measures that not only will stem further growth but will cut back existing arsenals. That is certainly the case in the Middle East. Poland, which has always lent its support to the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, is gratified by the timely initiatives of President Mubarak of Egypt and President Bush of the United States, which, if followed through, could result in much-needed stability in the region. In addition, the broader proposals of President Mitterrand of France and of Prime Minister Major of the United Kingdom - the latter pertaining especially to conventional weapons - commend themselves to careful examination and support by the international community.

The Gulf war painfully demonstrated how vulnerable States are in the face of ruthless aggression; yet the resolution of the conflict has also shown the very real potential of the United Nations system and also the resolve of its members to uphold the Charter and enforce respect for its fundamental principles. The current process of peace management in Iraq is also indicative of the role the United Nations can successfully play both in regard to international peace and security and in regard to disarmament.

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

The mandatory elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991) merely confirms the lessons which the international community needs to learn from the case of Iraq's near-successful attempt at developing nuclear weapons - contrary to its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) - and from its possession of other weapons of mass destruction.

As a strong supporter of the NPT, Poland is among those parties to the NPT which strongly encourage the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to proceed to a substantive revision and reinforcement of the effectiveness of its present safeguards system, which has almost failed in Iraq. The Agency's record of achievement, experience and expertise appears to us to be sufficient guarantee that this goal can be reached.

At this juncture, I should like to restate my country's profound satisfaction at the latest confirmation of the vitality and attractiveness of the NPT. With the recent accession of Lithuania and of four African States - South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe - to the NPT, the Treaty has become a much more effective and universal instrument. The non-proliferation regime is also gaining in substance and credibility as a result of the announced intention of France and China, both nuclear Powers and permanent members of the Security Council, to become parties to it.

Let me stress in this context that Poland attaches the utmost importance to the unequivocal declaration made in this Committee on 14 October by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Anatoly Zlenko, that his country "'... does not seek to possess nuclear weapons'" (A/C.1/46/PV.3, p. 79-80). We have been heartened that Ukraine "'... intends to join the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear State'" (ibid.).

(Mr. Moroniecki, Poland)

This is indeed an encouraging policy statement by a country with the scars of the Chernobyl disaster still fresh in its memory, as it is in the memory of its neighbours.

Poland is confident that Ukraine will waste no time in becoming a party to the Treaty. As a strong proponent of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, our country is committed to the further consolidation of the Treaty and its indefinite extension at the 1995 review conference. We share the view of those delegations which believe that the preparatory process for the Conference should commence in 1993.

The review procedure of another multilateral arms control agreement, the biological and toxin weapons Convention, ran its course at Geneva late last month. Its outcome is to our full satisfaction. We believe that the progress made with respect to confidence-building measures will contribute significantly to the openness of activities relevant to the Convention, thus strengthening its effectiveness and credibility. We are satisfied that the decision of the Conference to entrust to a group of experts the task of identifying and examining the scientific and technical aspects of potential verification measures is in the interests of reinforcing and promoting the universal appeal of the biological weapons Convention.

Poland strongly commends the Secretary-General on his informative and valuable report (A/46/301) containing the study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms. Enhanced transparency in such transfers is indispensable, especially in unstable and conflict-prone areas. Without prejudice to the right of States to self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter, such transparency mechanisms, under United Nations auspices, would function as an invaluable

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

early warning system to alert the international community to dangerous accumulations of arms which are clearly in excess of legitimate self-defence requirements.

We lend our full support to, and will co-sponsor, the initiative of the European Community countries to establish a non-discriminatory register of conventional arms transfers, administered by the United Nations. We are confident that, given the European experience of the practical application of the principle of reasonable sufficiency of military force and of transparency in military matters, the draft resolution will commend itself, with strong support, to the First Committee.

Apart from espousing an effective international mechanism and procedures for checking further proliferation of atomic, biological and chemical weapons, Poland is also making a meaningful contribution to efforts to develop and extend the scope of a workable missile technology control regime.

At the beginning of my statement I referred to history in the making, with all its unprecedented opportunities and challenges to man's natural quest for a safe and secure future. Recent developments in the area of nuclear disarmament are a case in point. Following on the now-consummated Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) and the recently-signed Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) - which we hope will soon be ratified by both its signatories - the two nuclear super-Powers have just come forward with a new, important gage of their special responsibility in the realm of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Poland has welcomed with profound gratification President Bush's historic initiative of 27 September concerning the unilateral reduction of the United

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

States nuclear arsenal. We have likewise hailed the subsequent positive response by President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union in cutting down the Soviet nuclear stockpile also. Thanks to these imaginative and epoch-making decisions, people everywhere can breathe a deep sigh of relief that, for the first time in four decades, the strategic nuclear bombers of the two Powers have finally been stood down from their constant alert. To echo the words of Ronald F. Lehman II, the Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in this Committee on 13 October, the two nuclear Powers "have begun to step down the thermonuclear ladder" (A/C.1/46/PV.4, p. 31). This is truly a historic turning-point. Poland, as, I am sure, other European States as well, now look forward to a possible breakthrough in regard to short-range nuclear arms also.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me briefly turn to what can be called a housekeeping problem of the First Committee: the rationalization and streamlining of its agenda with a view to enhanced effectiveness commensurate with the winds of change and with the opportunities that are now opening up. Like the representative of the Netherlands, Ambassador Henrik Wagenmakers, who was speaking on behalf of the European Community member States, Poland believes that the general yardstick for modifications should be "effectiveness before rhetoric and flexibility before dogmatism" (A/C.1/46/PV.3, p. 63).

We also see much merit in the arguments for change adduced by the delegation of New Zealand. Indeed, the Committee would be well advised to take a close look at those agenda items and procedures which at this time are clearly irrelevant and/or have been overtaken by events. In regard both to the substance and the mechanics of disarmament, let me also state in

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

conclusion that we welcome and support the valuable proposal by the Hungarian delegation concerning the desirability of establishing a small United Nations peace and disarmament information centre in Europe also. The arguments for such a step speak for themselves.

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

The delegation of Poland believes that the streamlining of the agenda and procedure of the Disarmament Commission has set a valuable precedent and example for the First Committee to study and, perhaps, follow.

The delegation of Poland would like to reserve its right to address in a separate statement at an appropriate later date some of the issues arising from the report of the Conference on Disarmament, especially the task of halting the uncontrolled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and developing the indispensable verification procedures.

Mr. LIM (Singapore): With the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent events, the cold war has finally ended. Two super-Powers are not only cooperating in the political and economic spheres but are also working together in nuclear disarmament. Recent announcements have raised the world's hopes of reducing the immense nuclear arsenals of both sides, a development which we warmly welcome. While the realization of total nuclear disarmament still seems to be a very distant possibility, we have begun taking the first careful steps in that direction.

The strangest paradox is that while global tensions are being eased by super-Power détente and moves towards eliminating some categories of weapons, those positive steps are not being emulated in the third world. Indeed, as fast as some old regional conflicts are resolved, new areas of conflict are emerging, for instance in the Balkans. The lesson that some developing nations have drawn from the Gulf conflict is that since not all are blessed with vast oil resources, perhaps it is better to remain armed against any contingencies - and to be armed, preferably, with the latest precision-guided munitions and weapons systems. Hence, the cold war may be replaced by one or two "little hot wars" conducted by nations that can afford neither the

(Mr. Lim, Singapore)

destructive consequences of armed conflict nor the immense economic burdens of expensive arms imports and huge military infrastructures.

It is against such a background that the proposal for a United Nations arms register must be viewed. We welcome it as an attempt to increase transparency in international arms transfers. We appreciate its value as a confidence-building measure. It may be true that such measures may lead nations to moderation in arming themselves and to the concentration of scarce resources on socio-economic development.

While supporting the proposal for a United Nations arms register in principle, we wish to offer certain comments and views. As stated in the Charter of the United Nations, every country has a right to legitimate self-defence. Indeed, one of the attributes of sovereignty is that any nation State that claims to be independent and sovereign should be able to defend its people and borders from unprovoked aggression. It can do so by itself or in a coalition with friends and allies, who are more inclined to give support and assistance if that State is also seen to be making strong efforts to protect itself, and not just getting a free ride. Although the recent Gulf War shows that the United Nations has the resolve and capability to reverse aggression, it is a costly and painful process fraught with many uncertainties. Elation over that victory should not mislead us into believing that there is now an alternative and automatic international shield against aggression. Hence, non-excessive national-defence expenditure remains both necessary and justified.

Defence expenditures can be viewed as national insurance expenditures, which provide assurance to both citizens and foreign investors. A judicious level of defence spending is a signal that a country takes its defence

(Mr. Lim, Singapore)

responsibilities seriously. Many new countries often use compulsory military service as a nation-building instrument, and this gives its citizens confidence that if conflict does break out they will be adequately armed and trained. This is the vital basis for a country's internal and external stability. The social and economic returns of such stability are enormous, provided, of course, that such defence expenditures should be affordable and commensurate with the security needs.

It is often observed that defence expenditures have a negative effect on social and economic development. This is too simplistic a view, as we have explained above. That statement usually conjures up an image of a military dictatorship spending billions on arms and showering benefits on its armed forces. While that may be true in certain cases, more often than not, when an economy suffers decay, it is usually mismanagement of the economy that bears the greater fault and not so much defence expenditure. Astute management of scarce economic resources is the key to the economic growth of a nation. This involves a judicious balance between allocating adequate resources for socio-economic needs and allocating them for security needs.

Developing countries depend greatly on the transfer of technology to achieve economic growth. Many civilian technologies have military applications. Indeed, it is not unusual for a technology to be developed in a military research project in the first instance before being used in civilian applications - electronics, aerospace, information systems, materials and others. It is easy to envisage a situation in which developed nations could impede the transfer of dual-use technology to developing nations on the pretext that they have military applications. Developing countries will therefore need to study carefully whether the proposed United Nations arms

(Mr. Lim, Singapore)

register will have a negative impact on the transfer of technology, which has important economic implications.

We should therefore be careful when considering any measure aimed at confidence-building that has the potential to lead to this result. As we understand it, the categories of arms that are to be reported in the proposed United Nations arms register are meant to be flexible and open to future revisions. This introduces the possibility of including such so-called technology-transfer items as production licensing, training, computer software, and high-tech electronic equipment, none of which is regarded as arms in the conventional sense. Our position is that those items are vital to economic development. The proposed United Nations arms register should not therefore be a means to restrict their flow to developing economies.

A nation's security is something that its people must take most seriously. Any move that affects national security must be carefully considered. Therefore, we would like to emphasize the importance of national security considerations in the context of transparency measures. This is in keeping with the principle of undiminished security for all States. In this context, we note that the proposed United Nations arms register contains provisions that may expand it to include other military matters beyond mere arms transfer. It is important that at the same time such provisions should stipulate this very important principle in order to assuage the fears of all developing countries. Developing countries would feel more assured that their national security is not compromised if it were clearly stated in writing that the proposed United Nations arms register is organized on a voluntary basis and that whatever information that is disclosed is consonant with their

(Mr. Lim, Singapore)

national-security considerations. This is an absolutely essential feature for many developing countries.

In addition, with the exception of arms transfers, all other transparency and confidence-building measures may be more effectively implemented on a bilateral or multilateral basis. That approach enhances regional security, at which many transparency measures are aimed. It is not imposed on any State and thus does not engender any feeling of being intruded upon. Such feelings can, more often than not, erode trust rather than build it. It increases direct contact between nations as they share their national security concerns, thereby promoting mutual understanding.

(Mr. Lim, Singapore)

Trust is best built up by direct communication between the parties involved, not through an intermediary. When confidence-building is developed to a mature level, it may include bilateral exchanges not just in the military sphere but at all levels of society. This is what we have been engaged in within the region of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), where our armed forces conduct annual bilateral exercises which promote mutual trust while our peoples establish economic, social and cultural ties.

Finally, we are concerned that there is an unusual rush on an issue which is of basic importance to all countries. The United Nations arms register is clearly a proposal that affects the national security of all countries. Careful study and thorough discussion are absolutely necessary because of the numerous implications and nuances and should be carefully carried out in a proper time frame by qualified experts who have been given a correct and precise mandate and terms of reference. All countries should be given the chance to state their views, and the recommendations of the experts should then be thoroughly examined again by Member States. With the recent Gulf conflict demonstrating that the world is still a dangerous place for small developing countries, we would advise that we should proceed with caution and due thought in formulating any agreement on international arms transfers and that there be proper discussions in that connection.

Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): I want first of all to state the satisfaction of my delegation at the election of Mr. Robert Mroziewicz of Poland to the chairmanship of this very important Committee, and to congratulate the other Committee officers, who share the responsibility for guiding our work to success. We wish also to express our

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appreciation for the excellent work of the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Yasushi Akashi, and for the positive endeavours of the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Sohrab Kheradi, and his staff.

There is special meaning in the participation in this Committee of a small, peaceful country that respects the law and whose security is based on the concept of collective security. Let me raise the voice of a country committed solely to law and to principles.

This is unquestionably a historic session of the General Assembly. It is taking place as the world crosses the threshold of a new era marked by the spread of democracy through an open, changing and inexhaustible process. The century now coming to an end will be known as the century in which democracy was revalued and restored. Once again we see that the struggle for democratic ideals has been and continues to be the great motive force of history. The factors in play could lead to a new world order, the result of many elements and related to this triumph of democracy.

The end of the cold war, growing understanding among the great Powers and the political changes in Eastern Europe are among the events that augur well for the advent of the new international order to which we aspire, a new order that must be established and developed in the coming decades. When we talk of building a new international order we are not thinking merely of a modified status quo or a new distribution of world power. We are trying rightly to ensure free coexistence among States, on the basis of the principles of the Charter, for all members of the international community.

(Mrs. Rodriguez, Uruguay)

The prohibition of the use of force, which entails respect for the basic principle of non-intervention, should be further strengthened as the keystone of international peace. The peaceful settlement of disputes should become invariable practice and should encompass the solution or containment of conflicts through properly coordinated action by the United Nations and regional organizations.

The disturbing and vivid experience of the recent Gulf crisis clearly proves the need for States in their actions to abide strictly by their obligations stemming from the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Clearly, there is a close and unbreakable link between the concept of disarmament and arms limitation and control on the one hand and the concept of peace and security on the other. Although dividing walls may crumble, although ideological confrontations may ease, although barriers to communication and interchange may fall, although the arm of democracy and freedom is stretching out to destroy anachronistic authoritarian systems, there can be no stable and lasting peace so long as gigantic arsenals exist throughout the world ready for use by any authoritarian, aggressive Government. Uruguay has never been and never will be neutral on this subject. There can be no neutrality between the aggressor and the victim, between the invader and the one struggling to regain his violated rights and reestablish international law.

It is only a few months since a flagrant violation of international law, which provided perfect proof that without a process of arms limitation and regulation there can be no genuine peace. The fragility of our world order was starkly highlighted, and we must now approach our task with even greater urgency.

(Mrs. Rodriguez, Uruguay)

The end of the cold war does not necessarily mean the end of the possibility of warlike conflict. Though fortunately the danger of an imminent worldwide conflagration has waned, threats to peace and security remain. We must therefore ensure that the system of collective security be applied with complete respect for the Charter so that the competent United Nations bodies can exercise effective control.

In our view, we can never place too much stress on the fact that the future stability, peace and security of the world do not depend exclusively on the effective functioning of machinery designed to deal with extreme circumstances; this makes recourse to collective measures inevitable. Hence the ever increasing need for multilateral preventive diplomacy making it possible to monitor and contain potential conflicts.

The new international situation should be used to stimulate the development of international law in all fields. The law relating to disarmament and arms regulation can particularly benefit from this new favourable situation. Uruguay hopes this new political climate will lead to universal acceptance of existing arms-control and arms-reduction treaties and to the signing and, above all, the good-faith compliance with new treaties signifying progress in this area, reducing tension and generating a healthy climate of security.

We have been pleased over the past year to note very important progress in the limitation of strategic arms, thanks to the recent agreements between the USSR and the United States. President Bush's announcement concerning the unilateral elimination of all tactical nuclear weapons and the offer to negotiate with the USSR on continued reductions of strategic weapons

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constitute a very positive step that we are confident will be followed by further progress. We must recognize the full significance of the positive response of President Gorbachev.

In Latin America the first step has already been taken. The determination to find solutions is firm and deeply rooted. The region has been taking important decisions to consolidate the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the area. Thus, the agreement signed by Argentina and Brazil on 18 June in Guadalajara reaffirmed the desire of those countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only and reiterated their wish to adopt measures to give full effect over the broadest possible geographical extent to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Uruguay welcomes and fully supports that wish.

(Mrs. Rodriguez, Uruguay)

My country has often and in various forms expressed the desire that the whole of Latin America should be a nuclear-weapon-free zone - a goal which will not be achieved until all Latin American countries are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Uruguay will continue to be ready to promote, to collaborate, to engage in all the necessary consultations, and to cooperate in every way possible to encourage the four countries which have not yet done so to sign, ratify or do whatever is necessary in order for the Treaty to cover the entire continent, thereby making the regional non-proliferation regime comprehensive.

Uruguay welcomes the recent accession of Lithuania and the four African States - Tanzania, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe - to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and also the recently announced intention of France and China, both nuclear Powers and permanent members of the Security Council, to become parties to the Treaty. In this regard we understand that it would be very important for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to associate itself formally with the appropriate safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We hope that in the not too distant future new States will participate fully in the NPT regime.

In our view, the NPT continues to be the keystone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime although we do, of course, recognize that there may well be other means of achieving the same objective. The universality for the Treaty still continues to be our goal.

As regards chemical weapons, we must mention the Mendoza Declaration signed on 4 September 1991 by Argentina, Brazil and Chile as well as by Uruguay whereby our countries undertake not to develop or produce, to acquire,

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stockpile, possess or transfer, directly or indirectly, or to use chemical or biological weapons.

Permit me here to say something about the question of chemical weapons, as it now stands in the view of my Government. It is well known that from the legal point of view, the present situation is governed by the existence and applicability of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 relating to the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, which was supplemented later by the 1972 Convention on biological weapons. These two texts, which are of obvious importance and must be applied, do not in any way eliminate the range of problems associated internationally with chemical weapons.

We would like to congratulate Ambassador Arteaga of Venezuela who, in his capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament, presented us with an excellent report a few days ago on the work of the Conference during the last year, especially with regard to negotiations on the complete banning of chemical weapons - negotiations which, we are happy to note, are making good progress in Geneva.

Although at the present time Uruguay participates in the Conference only as an observer, we must acknowledge the important and substantial progress achieved in these delicate negotiations over the last 12 months. Uruguay trusts that agreement will be achieved next year and we are absolutely certain that the goal we all seek will be achieved - that is a convention on the complete and effective prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and their destruction. We believe that the most

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outstanding and important characteristics of the convention should be universality and transparency.

This is the great challenge facing us today. It is a serious and inescapable commitment on the part of the Conference on Disarmament vis à vis the international community and my country applauds and supports it.

We are optimistic, but we are also realistic and we therefore feel that without a profound spirit of international cooperation, without an unswerving determination to achieve, in the near future, a convention which will be sure to be applied immediately, without a true spirit of compromise on the part of all, efforts which have been undertaken thus far will have been in vain and empty.

In another context, I should like to point out that the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention on biological weapons, which concluded its work in Geneva only a few weeks ago, approved some important measures. These will, we believe, contribute to the strengthening of the regime of the Convention, particularly the establishment of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts to examine and study methods of verification. In general terms, therefore, we can say that the results of the Third Review Conference have been gratifying.

We would also like to say a few words about the relationship between the limitation or regulation of armaments in terms of disarmament and the fundamental problem of our day - protection of the environment.

If we do not achieve an appropriate and rational process of limitation of armaments, if the question of nuclear tests and explosions is not settled, we shall be contributing to the awful problem of the deterioration of our environment and, hence, to the death of our planet.

(Mrs. Rodrigues, Uruguay)

The Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques is just an example - a first step - towards the regulation, by means of a convention, of the undeniable link between two vital factors for the future of mankind - that is disarmament and the environment. But this is a convention which focused on just one aspect of the problem. Moreover, the idea for that Convention first came up in 1972, that is 19 years ago, and the problem of protection of the environment is becoming more urgent, more serious, more important every day. There is an urgent need now for solutions that transcend anything that might have been thought of at the time. This means that we must face up to the problem squarely and we trust that this item will be approached with frankness and with the necessary thought at the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Uruguay, faithful to its unswerving tradition and the principles it has been upholding in various forums on the subject, will support all efforts and initiatives designed to achieve this objective. In this regard we feel that the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/46/364 gives us an intelligent, solidly based approach and a realistic view of the problem.

Finally, we must mention - if only briefly and by way of illustration - a theme to which all developing countries attach great importance. I refer to the undeniable and necessary link between disarmament and development.

Now that democratic space has been opened up and is becoming more widespread, Latin America is experiencing an economic and social decline, one which will require an innovative response. As in all times of crisis there is light and shadow. International democratization - the basis for any

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development - has been reflected in a global improvement in human rights but the fact remains that now more than ever it is necessary to create new conditions for achieving global development.

The fuller integration of developing countries into a multilateral, open and equitable trade system is the basis upon which the very essence of democracy rests. This, in its turn, will not achieve full growth if it is not rooted in the fertile soil of peace and international security. An armed world in which the great and the small acquire powerful and inhumane instruments of destruction and death is certainly not the most fertile soil for consolidating peace.

The Secretary-General, in his annual report, and Under-Secretary-General Akashi in his recent statement to the Committee, rightly remind us of the need to approach peace and security from a multidimensional standpoint - one in which the military aspect is considered in conjunction with political, economic, social and other elements.

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The disarmament process must necessarily go hand in hand with development. Therefore, new financial resources must be allocated to priority civilian areas. Those priorities include - in the light of the current situation and the new order that we want to create - the environment, drug trafficking and terrorism. Hundreds of millions of dollars today being spent on armaments should be devoted to better causes.

Uruguay accordingly welcomes the United Nations study on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms, and supports the recommended creation of a universal and non-discriminatory register of arms transfers. We believe that putting into practice such a regime, as a first step, would contribute effectively and realistically to openness and transparency in this area.

As long as children continue to die in any part of the world as a result of extreme poverty, sickness and malnutrition, as long as thousands of millions of dollars are poured into armaments anywhere in the world, we shall know that we have still not done enough, we shall know that we have done very little for the well-being of humanity, we shall know that we have still not remedied a system that, as we are daily aware, is seriously unjust.

The saying that peace is not simply the absence of war has never been more relevant than it is today.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.